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Papers Indicate Mengele May Have Been Held and Freed After War

By RALPH BLUMENTHAL

Newly declassified United States intelligence documents indicate that Josef Mengele, widely regarded as the most notorious German war criminal still at large, may have been arrested and released in the American occupation zone of Vienna after World War II.

Other records indicate that Dr. Mengele, who was chief physician at the Auschwitz death camp, applied in Buenos Aires for a Canadian visa in 1962 under a pseudonym and that the Canadians informed American intelligence officials of the attempt.

The last reported sightings of Dr. Mengele were in Paraguay in the 1970's, and the Government of Gen. Alfredo Stroessner maintains that he has since left the country. But Serge and Beate Klarsfeld, the French Nazi-hunters who tracked down Klaus Barbie in Bolivia, believe Dr. Mengele, who would be 73 years old, is still in Paraguay.

West Germany has had a warrant out for Dr. Mengele's arrest on murder charges since 1959.

Obtained Under Information Act

The American intelligence documents were obtained through the Freedom of Information Act by the Simon Wiesenthal Center, a Los Angeles-based institute for the documentation of Nazi crimes.

Four pages of documents bearing on the case have been withheld because they "reasonably could be expected to cause damage to the national security" or involve foreign government information, according to the Army Intelligence and Security Command, which released the other records.

Declassified documents obtained by other investigators indicate that the Justice Department was alerted to Dr. Mengele's possible presence on a flight to Miami from Paraguay in 1979. Federal agents staked out the flight, but Dr. Mengele never arrived.

The disclosures come as survivors of Auschwitz in the United States, Europe and Israel — including several sets of twins on whom Dr. Mengele conducted experiments — prepare to gather this weekend at the death camp site in Poland for a commemoration of their liberation 40 years ago. From there they will go to Israel for a conference on the Mengele case.

Letter on Vienna Arrest

The declassified documents include a letter dated April 26, 1947, from Ben J. M. Gorby, a special agent of the United States Counter-Intelligence Corps in Germany, to the commanding officer of the 430th C.I.C. detachment in Vienna.

Mr. Gorby wrote that his office had received information that Dr. Mengele "has been arrested in Vienna." An informant, he went on, "stated that to the best of his knowledge Dr. Mengele was arrested in the U.S. Zone of Germany" — an apparently erroneous reference to Vienna, where the 430th unit was stationed.

If the report were true, Mr. Gorby continued, Dr. Mengele should be interrogated about the fate of about 20 Jewish children evacuated by him from Auschwitz in November 1944.

No response to the letter was included in the declassified documents, and the Wiesenthal Center said all attempts to locate Mr. Gorby through the Army had failed.

Another declassified document is a letter dated June 26, 1962, from Maj. Buford F. McCharen Jr. of the 513th Intelligence Corps of the United States Army in Europe to G. M. Bailey, a Canadian visa control officer in Cologne, West Germany.

The letter is a response to a query concerning a "Joseph Menke" who evidently had applied for a Canadian visa in Buenos Aires. Major McCharen attached an Army intelligence report identifying "Joseph Menke" as Josef Mengele of Auschwitz.

There is no indication from the records disclosed that American authorities sought to use the information from the Canadians to track down the fugitive or to advise the West German Government.

Rabbi Marvin Hier, dean of the Wiesenthal Center, said the documents "create reasonable doubt as to whether or not the U.S. had a role in the case of Josef Mengele, and the only way the truth will surface is an official investigation by the U.S. and Canadian Governments."

Dr. Mengele, who was born in Günzburg, Bavaria, on March 16, 1911, was a major in the Nazi SS. From May 1943 to January 1945 he was a physician at the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp, where up to four million Jews and other prisoners were gassed and cremated.

According to the West German arrest papers, Dr. Mengele was accused of the following crimes, among others: sorting out arriving prisoners, particularly old people, children and pregnant women, for immediate gassing; throwing the Zyklon B poison gas into the gas chambers; throwing children alive into fires; conducting medical experiments on living prisoners, especially twins, by injecting their eyes, spines and brains with camphor and other chemicals; shooting children in order to perform autopsies on them; exposing healthy prisoners to yellow fever and extreme X-ray radiation for study; sterilizing and castrating prisoners; draining the blood of children for study, and cutting off body parts of female prisoners for tissue cultures.

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